Lafayette Historical Society Newsletter

P.O. Box 133 Lafayette, California 94549

President: Marechal Duncan (283-6812)

Vol. 23, No.1
February 1996

President's Message

In October, 1967, the Lafayette Design Project suggested that the Lafayette Library Association organize a committee to collect, catalog, and house, in the Lafayette Library, historical material relating to early and current history of the community. These files would be open for public use in the library only. That committee later became the Lafayette Historical Society with its own constitution and by-laws.

During the last twenty-eight years, our members have collected and assembled valuable, irreplaceable archives. Unfortunately, the archives are so extensive, they are stored not only, in the Lafayette Library, but in several members' homes. We are actively working on a permanent home to display "Old Betsy," our 1919 model fire engine, and to store and display our archives.

We still need additional help organizing our archives. If you wish to help, please contact Wilbur Somerton at 284-9785 or Marechal Duncan at 283-6812.

Once again, we are seeking a person or persons who would like to be our newsletter editor. The editor does not have to write the articles, just compile the articles submitted by the members, and set up the newsletter. We have it printed at the Lafayette School District office.

I wish to thank our new Programs and Tours Chairman, Keith Blakeney, for a very delightful and successful tour to Mare Island and the Vallejo Historical and Naval Museum. Several members of the Moraga Society, Orinda Society and even one from the Martinez Society joined us.

In our last newsletter, I mentioned that our Board had accepted, with regrets, the resignation of Frances Hunt from our board. Frances was a Director and in charge of the Newsletter mailing project. Frances Hunt passed away the end of last December. We will miss her and extend our sympathy to her family and her close friends.

Cordially,

Marechal Duncan

Marechal Duncan

Hotels In Lafayette by Bill Wakeman

Mill Hough built and operated the first hotel within the confines of the city limits in 1853. It was located on First Street between Golden Gate Way and Mt. Diablo Blvd. He operated the hotel for two years and was appointed Post Master of the Acalanes Post Office at the same time. He retired as postmaster in 1855, closed the hotel and built another in Walnut Creek which burned down in 1865.

The next hotel recorded was owned by Lawrence M. Brown, youngest son of Elam Brown. He built his hotel and store on the corner of Mt. Diablo Blvd. And Moraga Road; present site of the Worlds Savings Bank. In 1862 there was a ball held at the hotel on Christmas night. The ticket cost $3.00 each and this included supper, music and dancing, but the festivities were dampened by a storm with brought five inches of rain in as many days.

In 1875 Brown sold the hotel property to N.L. Hastings. Shortly after that Mary Yager Brown foreclosed the mortgage on Hastings. In 1881 she sold the property to J.S. Moore who then sold the property to Jasper Botters in 1883. He built a new building which was completed in 1894 with the following announcements in the local paper. "The new hotel at Struggleville is nearing completion and when finished will be quite an improvement to Lafayette." In answer to this item "the Gazette correspondent at Pen-Kin - Post (should have been Pew-Kin -Post). Who parts his hair in the middle to keep his head evenly balanced must be a sad mistake, have gotten one hair too many to one side, to have so completely over balanced to have styled this rapidly growing town "Struggleville.

Then in 1892 Brian Hastings and John Vaughn torched the hotel because the bar tender refused to serve them drinks after hours. They both were sentenced to five years in San Quentin Prison.

The following announcement appeared in the Moraga items column in a local paper September 1894. The hotel (Way Side Inn) that was built in Lafayette by E.J. Brandy and Co., is now completed. We must admit it is a great improvement to the town, as it affords a bit of accommodation to travelers and excursionists. In 1898 it was sold to B. Cunningham. Then it was sold to a third party who named the hotel Wayside Inn. In 1899 "Liverpool Joe" ran a small hotel (location unknown). It burned down and it was believed that Joe died in the fire. He was seen in Oakland a few days later. So another rumor bites the dust.

In 1921 Pat Medau purchased the Way Side Inn. Since then it has been used a butcher shop, ice cream parlor, insurance office, dress shop, Greyhound bus depot and a residence until 1978 when it was purchased by the Assistance League of Diablo Valley. In 1900 Philip Lamp built the last hotel on the hotel block. In 1928 it burned down when the cook forgot he was cooking a pot of sauce and lay down for a nap. Fortunately, he escaped the fire. The Lafayette Volunteer Fire Department responded with the 1919 Model "T" Ford fire engine but they couldn't control the fire. The Walnut Creek fire department also responded and as part of their equipment they had a pump that they placed in the swimming hole located behind the Wayside Inn and were able to save all the buildings in the area except the hotel.

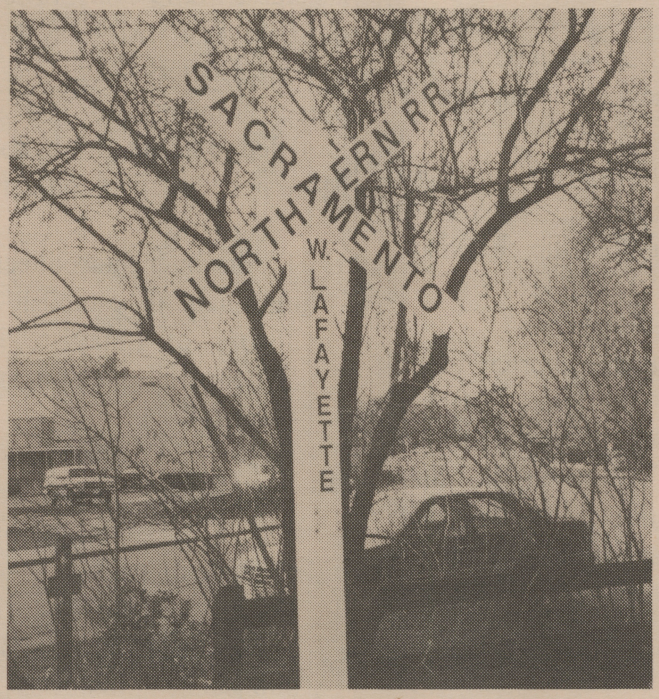
The newest hotel in Lafayette is the Park Hotel, which maintains the traditions of good food and comfortable accommodations as started by the earlier hotels.

LHS To Aid Third Grade Classes On Local History

The Lafayette Historical Society is gathering "hands-on" items to enhance the third grade Social Studies unit on local history. We hope to collect items such as cooking utensils, household items, tools, lanterns, books, school supplies, toys, clothing, etc. that may have been in use in the nineteenth century. Actual items from that period, reproduction or "look-a-like" items would all work well. They will be placed in a "trunk" along with the historical photo enlargements for the children to explore.

If you have items which you would be willing to donate or if you have any suggestions or questions, please contact me evenings at 283-3409.
Thank you, Nancy Flood

LHS Replaces Railroad Signs On Lafayette Trail



LHS reports that two Sacramento Northern railroad signs on the Lafayette trail were recently replaced. They had been destroyed by vandals. There are now five RR signs within Lafayette along the old right of way of the Sacramento Northern RR which in now known as "The Trail". Each sign marks the location of a former flag stop within Lafayette. The five stations are identified as Lafayette, W. Lafayette, Reliez, Glenside and Burton. The signs which were replaced are, W. Lafayette near School Street and also Reliez near Reliez Station Road. The other three signs were also freshly painted and repaired. Each signs is separately labeled as to its location. This is a project of LHS which first installed them in 1991 with the help of Boy Scout Troop 204. Ollie Hamlin and Bruce Somerton are credited with making the recent repairs and replacements.
P.S . The W. Lafayette sign near School Street was vandalized again in January 1996.

New Life Member of LHS

Mrs. Marjorie L. Stolley becomes the 25th Life member of the LHS with her contribution of $100.00 in January 1996.

Other recent Life members in 1995 include:

- William and Dale Kari
- Jim and Olive Wilhelm
- Bob and Patty Kahn
- Marechal and Doris Duncan
- Jean Kindall

The regular annual fee for a family membership in LHS is $10.00 per year which is due and payable as of the first of each year. A total of 25 members have now chosen to become Life Members by paying a one time fee of $100.00 It is a bargain For more information write to LHS P.O. Box 133 Lafayette, CA 94549 or call Ollie Hamlin, membership chairman, at 283-6822.

Please return your membership envelope which is enclosed in this issue of our Newsletter. Your dues accomplished so much. Since we exist solely on the dues and donations, we must stretch out membership dollars over the following:

- Archives materials - acid free tissues, boxes and folders, frames, hangers, special pencils, pens, and inks, and preservatives.
- Clerical material and postage.
- Computer material; photography and cataloging material.
- Library material including microfilm, books, and tapes (for oral histories).
- Program material for school tours and lectures.
- Printed material, including "Guide to Historical Lafayette" which includes a map and illustrations.

If your dues are not current to the first of January, 1996, please mail your check in the enclosed envelope.

Object of the Lafayette Historical Society

As stated in the Constitution and Bylaws of the Lafayette Historical Society, the object of the Society shall be the discovery, preservation, and dissemination of knowledge about the history of Lafayette. More particularly its object shall be:

1. To discover and collect material which may help to establish or illustrate the history of Lafayette, its exploration, settlement, development, and activities----etc.
2. To provide for the preservation of such material & for its accessibility as far as may be feasible, to all who wish to examine or study it;-----etc.
3. To disseminate historical information and arouse interest in the past by publishing historical material in newspapers or otherwise, by holding meetings with addresses, presentations, speakers, planning historical subjects in the schools; and by marking historical buildings, sites, trails, and trees.

If you have a special interest or would like to help your society in fulfilling any of the objects of the Society, please indicate on your Dues envelope or telephone your president, Marechal Duncan at 283-6812.

Membership Drive

We are anxious to recruit new members and will have two programs this year devoted to this purpose. The first of these is in March and we promise you an interesting program (see March - Gettysburg meeting). You are all urged, not only to come yourselves, but to bring a friend or two who might have an interest in our activities and in becoming a member. There will be a social opportunity at the beginning of the program during which to enjoy some refreshments and introduce your friends to other members. We anticipate we will all have membership in mind and give our guests every encouragement to join the LHS. If you have a question please call Ollie Hamlin, Membership Chairman, 283-6812.

Refreshments Committee

We are forming a new committee to provide refreshments for our programs. If you are interested in helping or have a question please call Keith Blakeney, Program Chairman, 284-2221.

Phone Committee

We are forming a phone committee to make reminder phone calls before our programs and for other special occasions. If you are interested in helping of have a question please call Keith Blakeney, Program Chairman, 284-2221.

Program Committee

We are planning an interesting schedule of programs for you this year, one we feel you will really enjoy. It will be more ambitious than in the past and we ask that each and every one of you give a hand when called on and to support your programs with your attendance.

May - Annual Potluck Dinner

Date/Time:	Tuesday, may 14, 1996; 6:00 p.m.	*Details to follow.*
Place:	Lafayette Veterans Hall	

July - Railroad Museum Tour

Tour will include luncheon in Rio Vista.

Date/Time:	Saturday, July 13, 1996	*Details to follow.*
Place:	Rio Vista	

September - John Muir Home Tour

Tour will include luncheon in Martinez.

Date/Time:	Saturday, Sept. 21, 1996	*Details to follow.*
Place:	Martinez	

January Mare Island Tour

Our trip to Mare Island couldn't have been better. For starters we were blessed with a clear sunny day in a week otherwise notable for heavy rain. Our bus, courtesy of Dryer's Grand Ice Cream, was nearly new with air-cushion ride. It was great and so was our driver, Sally. We picked up our docent at the Vallejo Naval and Historical Museum (the old Vallejo City Hall, and a perfect building for the purpose) and headed for Mare Island. We were guided over the island and heard a most interesting background of the base's evolution since its founding in 1854. Our guide was quite knowledgeable, having worked on the island for a period himself. The highlight of the tour was, of course, St. Peter's Chapel, built in 1901 with one of the world's greatest collection of Tiffany stained glass windows. St. Peters is truly a beautiful architectural gem from an earlier era and is meticulously maintained.

We headed back to the Museum for our gourmet luncheon and more delving into the past. The Museum curator gave us an audio/visual presentation providing further background of Vallejo, its connection with the naval base, and its brief stint as capital of California. Following lunch we browsed through the museum for about 45 minutes, being greatly entertained by the many interesting artifacts and antiquities. We arrived back in Lafayette about 2:30 as scheduled, being well satisfied with our outing.

PS Thanks to everybody for the great support. We not only filled our 44 passenger bus, the response was so great we could have filled another. For those of you who couldn't make it we are planning a reprise tour, probably in May. We will keep you informed.

March - Gettysburg Address

Date/Time:	March 19, 1996; 7:30p.m.
Place:	Lafayette Christian Church
Price:	There will be a nominal price of $4.00 ($5.00 at the door) to cover our expenses.
Reservations:	Please make checks payable to Lafayette Historical Society and mail to P.O. Box 1336, Lafayette, CA, 94549, before February 29. It is very important that we know by this time how many for whom to provide.
Agenda:	7:30 - Social and Refreshments (meet our guests and encourage membership) 7:55 - Announcements and introductions 8:05 - Speaker Wayne Korsinen 8:35 - Question 9:00 - Curtain down

Wayne Korsinen who has spoken before the Lafayette Historical Society twice previously in other rolls, will portray Mr. John Hay, personal secretary to President Abraham Lincoln. Mr. Hay accompanied President Lincoln to Gettysburg in November 1863, thus Mr. Korsinen will give eyewitness view of President Lincoln's 25 hours in Gettysburg where he dedicated a National Cemetery and gave a brief speech which very unexpectedly, became famous. Mr. Korsinen will also recite the Gettysburg Address.

Mr. Korsinen has taught American History for mare than 30 years in Antioch HS and has long been interested in historical presentations.

"Lafayette Vistas"

"Lafayette Vistas" is published quarterly by the City of Lafayette for the residents of Lafayette It reports on issues, people, and events that affect the city.

Steve Falk, Assistant City Manager, is the Editor. He includes in each issue the article "Historical Snapshot", which is written by Bill Wakeman our Lafayette Society's Historian. The Winter, 1996, issue featured an article about the Pony Express, Plaza Park, and Lumbering Leaves Lafayette. A picture, of Plaza Park from our archives was included.

Steve Falk credits Bill Wakeman and the Lafayette Historical Society for the contribution.

Check your attic, closets & desks

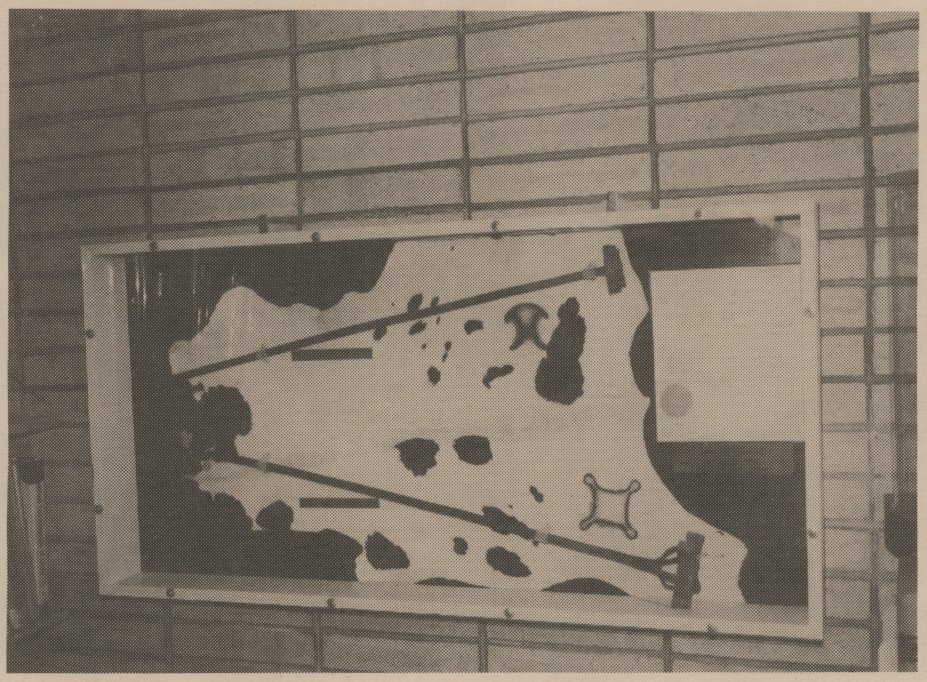
We have been told by past Board members and members at large that they have stored in their closets or desks, archive material which they have been keeping for the society. Some, I'm sure, may have been misplaced or inadvertently discarded.

If you have any such material please telephone me at 283-6812, and I'll pick it up.

We wish to consolidate the material and obtain an accurate inventory.

Marechal Duncan

Lafayette Display



The picture above shows the branding iron display which is mounted on the south wall of the Lafayette Library. The display houses the branding irons of Elam Brown and Warren Brown. Copies of the original brand registration are also displayed.

Archives To Be Computerized

To make the LHS archives more accessible to school children and the public in general, a committee has been appointed to develop and implement a plan to place all archive material on computer. This material is currently stored in file cabinets at the Lafayette Library. Bill Somerton chairs the committee with Ruth Dyer and Angela Broadhead as members. Bron Heuer and Mary O'Leary will serve as volunteers.

The exact form of the computerization will be decided after the Lafayette Library receives its new advanced computer system. The cooperation at Branch Librarian, Ann Partridge, and the able assistance of the library's computer expert, John Kestell, will make this project possible.

This will be a major but very worthwhile task and more volunteers with library and/or computer skills will be needed. Volunteers may call Bill at 284-9785 or Ruth at 283-8312.

Historical Display Ideas and Materials Needed

For several years the LHS has prepared historical displays for the display case on the west side of the Lafayette Lucky store. The displays depict the important historical events that have helped shape the character of Lafayette and are designed to inform newcomers (and remind old-timers) of the rich heritage of this wonderful community.

There have been over a dozen different displays on such topics as the early history of Lafayette, the schools, the Lafayette Design project, the Pony Express, "railroads in Lafayette," etc. As new displays are mounted the former displays are moved to the San Francisco Federal lobby.

Help is needed to keep this series of displays going. We need artifacts, early photographs and other memorabilia, but mostly we need persons with display ideas and with a willingness to assist in researching the subject. We have persons with expertise in putting the display together if we can get help with ideas and research. Please call Bill Somerton at 284-9785 if you wish to be involved in this important public service.

1995-1996 Officers and Committee Chairs

President	Marechal Duncan*
Vice President	Nancy Flood*
Treasurer	Sheila Piriano*
Recording Secretary	Ruth Dyer*
Corresponding Secretary	Oliver Hamlin*
Archives & Historical Displays	Bill Somerton*
Book Sales	Ruth Dyer
Historian	Bill Wakeman*
Publicity	Elly Conrad*
Plaza Park	Ray Peters*
Program	Keith Blakeney*
Annual Potluck Dinner	Richard Johnson
Fire Engine	George Wasson
Membership	Oliver Hamlin
Oral Historian	Nancy Flood
Newsletter Mailing	Ruby Sturman
Walking Tours	Bill Wakeman
Joseph VanOverveen*	

*Board Member

Lafayette Historical Society

POST OFFICE BOX 133 LAFAYETTE, CALIF. 94549

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION AND RENEWAL FORM

Last name | First name | Spouses first name

Street address | Phone number

City, state, zip code | Date

ACTIVITIES OF THE SOCIETY

- Collect, preserve, and make available to researchers and the public Lafayette's records, historic materials, photographs
- Disseminate historical information and encourage public interest in local history through programs, exhibits, field trips
- Provide care and maintenance of Lafayette's early fire engine, "Old Betsy"
- Identify and place markers at historic sites
- Newsletter
- Conduct walking tours
- Record and maintain oral histories

Annual dues: Please check appropriate line indicating amount of dues payable, attach your check in the amount shown--adding any contribution you can make toward the fire engine repair fund--and mail to **Lafayette Historical Society, P.O. Box 133, California 94549**.

_____	**Student membership**	$ 2.50	
_____	**Family membership**	$ 10.00	
_____	**Business membership**	$ 50.00	
_____	**Life Membership**	$ 100.00	
		DUES	$_____
		Contribution to help Maintain fire engine	$_____
		TOTAL ENCLOSED	$_____

Please indicate your area of special interest

_____ Archives
_____ Landmarks
_____ Fire Engine
_____ Telephone Committee
_____ Annual Potluck Dinner Committee
_____ Research
_____ Oral History
_____ Photograph Collection
_____ Newspaper Clippings
_____ Walking Tours
_____ Displays
_____ Tours & Programs

_____ Other: _____

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